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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

NOVEMBER, 1852.

MORAL EVILS OF WAR.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLIMPSE OF THE LATE MEXICAN WAR.

These evils we may learn in part by glancing at *the nature of war, or the character of its agents*. "The chief evil of war," said Channing, "is moral. It is the concentration of all crimes." Robert Hall denominates it "the fruitful parent of crimes," and says "it reverses all the rules of morality, and is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue; a system out of which almost all the virtues are excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are included." These are strong statements; but it would be easy to prove every one of them from our late conflict with Mexico.

Take a specimen or two of *war-morality* from commanders in the Mexican war, whom we suppose to have been as good as their profession will allow. Gen. Taylor, in reply to one who inquired his views of the war, said, just as every warrior *must* say, "It is sufficient for me to know that our country is at war with a foreign nation, to do all in my power to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination, by the most vigorous and energetic operations, *without inquiring about its justice, or anything else connected with it.*" Gen. Scott, in refusing an application for the discharge of a soldier (Thompson) from the service, replied, "It is alleged that he has imbibed conscientious scruples against performing military duty. If the man be mad, he can be discharged on a surgeon's certificate to that effect; but, if he has only turned coward, we have ample means of punishing him if he should, when ordered, refuse to fight."

Here is the Christianity of war; and well does a popular writer (JOHN S. C. ABBOTT) expose it in the following strain: "Suppose that in the army of Mexico there is a young man who has also become a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. He has no longer a heart to be killing his fellow-men, and seeks a discharge from his regiment. Santa Anna replies—'If you are a Christian, you will fight the better for it; if you are crazy, we will send you to the mad-house; if you are a coward, we have ample means to make you fight.'

"The morning preceding a bloody battle dawns. The Mexican Christian and the American Christian bow in prayer. 'O Lord, (each one says) teach

me this day to do my duty. May I every hour manifest the meek, forgiving, fraternal spirit of Jesus Christ. May I love my fellow men, resent no injuries, and, if smitten on one cheek, turn the other. May I love the Lord my God with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself.'

"Their prayers are interrupted by the sound of the trumpet, and the rolling of the drums, summoning them to meet in battle array. The Christian brothers face each other with gleaming sabres. The charge is sounded. The clangor of battle rises to the ear of God. His children are soon rolling in the dust in the murderous death-gripe. Sabres are dripping with blood. Cannon balls are tearing their way through the dense masses of men, and strewing the ground with the dying and the dead; and shells are exploding in the midst of husbands and fathers, desolating a thousand distant homes with the cries of widows and of orphans.

"The two Christian brothers meet face to face upon the battle-field. They are both accomplished swordsmen. Long they hew and hack at each other in Christian love, till their mangled bodies fall, covered with mortal wounds, and they go together from the field of blood to the judgment seat of Christ." And this is the *only* kind of Christianity that *can* be practised in war.

Such is the very nature of war. It is a moral Upas, overspreading the land with a species of moral malaria, fatal to the virtues of any people. So our fathers found it even in the Revolution.* It debases the intellect of its own agents, and sears their consciences, and hardens their hearts, and brutalizes more or less the whole inner man. It kindles the worst passions, panders to the lowest vices, instigates the foulest crimes. It removes nearly all moral restraints, and puts in their place the strongest incentives to intemperance, debauchery and every species of wickedness. Nor does it provide any antidote to these malign influences—no home, no virtuous society, no sanctuary with its hallowed services, no Sabbath with its blessed privileges. War knows no day of God, but rudely tramples it in the dust, and fights its battles, and continues its marches, its drills and all its operations, on this as on any other day of the week. Details on every one of these points might be multiplied to any extent; but we have already given enough to show the baleful influences of war on all that come within their reach.

Look at the general character of warriors. It is no slander to say, what every man of common intelligence knows, that the men sent forth to our war in Mexico, like the mass of soldiers the world over, were for the most part the offscourings of society. Take specimens from any section of the country you please. Those from Philadelphia, for example, made themselves a terror on their way to Mexico, and got the name of "the killers." The New Orleans Courier, January, 1847, stated that they answered the usual call for fare in the cars by a pistol-ball at the conductor, which came near killing him. "Our regiment," says one of the number writing back to the Philadelphia North American, "became the terror of every one. They entered the houses, turned out the owners and their families, and attempted indignities upon the females. On the evening of the 11th, they entered the house of a Frenchman, and broke into the chamber of his daughter, when he fired, and shot two of them. Capt. Hill came up with a detachment of fifty men, and took the rest to prison. The evening before we left New

* See a graphic illustration of this in an old, rare volume, entitled "BATH-KOL, or a Voice from the Wilderness," published "by the Presbytery of the Eastward," (New Eng.) near the close of the revolutionary war. Though friends of the war, they illustrate at great length, and deeply deplore its tendencies to skepticism and irreligion, the frauds and dishonesties, the profanities, and Sabbath-breaking, and licentiousness, and a host of other moral evils which it engendered, and spread far and wide through the community. See also PEACE MANUAL, pp. 174-6, 179-81. Adv. of Peace, Vol. III., (1839) pp. 73-79. Vol. IV., (1841) pp. 94-5, 208-16, 230-5.

Orleans, they entered his tent, and attempted to murder him; but the guard fortunately came up and rescued him." They also went to a store, in New Orleans, and shot the owner dead behind his counter. These were only a part of their lawless, bloody freaks in that place alone.

The New York Tribune, Jan. 11, 1847, gave some graphic sketches of the regiment then on the eve of embarking from that port for the war. "The men were in a state of the most miserable poverty and squalor, having sold their six months' rations of clothes, the blankets from their beds, their boots, knives, and every thing that would bring a cent of money, all of which was of course immediately spent for the most villanous poisoned liquor. The poor creatures, thus stripped of comfortable clothing, loathsome dirty, covered with vermin, and maddened with poisoned whiskey, have been for some time on the point of a furious mutiny, because they were not paid the three months' wages which had been promised them; and on several occasions, the spirit of insubordination has broken out so violently, that it was obliged to be put down by force, and that not without great difficulty, and danger of a general revolt. Fears are entertained, that the vessels will never arrive at their destination, but that the officers will be murdered, and the ships taken possession of by these lawless, hungry, drunken, desperate, wretched men. They are doubtless unimpeachable pirate-timber.

"The scenes at Fort Hamilton, where these men have been encamped, and where five more companies still remain, are represented to us as being of the most pitiable and disgusting character. In the bar-room of Colonel Church, reeking with the fumes of 'rot-gut' whiskey, colored and drugged up to the brandy proof, could be seen the volunteers, drinking, swearing, quarrelling and fighting, offering to sell, to cunning speculators who are always on hand at such places and times, their clothes, and every thing else they possessed, or could lay their hands on, at any price, and of course spending the money at the bar before they left the room. Then every once in a while came some poor squalid wife, lugging a baby papoose-wise, and searching for her husband, who had abandoned her to starvation, and 'listed' for the chance of rum and idleness."¹

In view of such facts, we cannot wonder that the seat of the war teemed with all sorts of villanies, with insubordination and riot, with theft and robbery, with rape and murder, or that ship-loads of what the papers called *war-scoundrels*, no longer endurable in Mexico, were finally sent back by force to the United States. Take a few specimens:² "The scene of war now presented in Mexico," says a writer to the N. Y. Jour. of Commerce, "is the most disgusting and soul-sickening spectacle that ever disgraced a page in human history. The late letters from Monterey show that the murder of *non-combatants* is the daily diversion of the American troops." Says a writer from Santa Fe, "The soldiery here have degenerated into a military mob, are the most open violators of law, and daily heap insult and injury upon the people of the territory; and as matters now stand, the civil government is powerless to grant them redress. One half of the captains of companies do not know the number of their men, nor where they are to be found; and they themselves are to be seen nightly in fandangoes, and even less reputable places of dissipation. From the highest officer to the private soldier, all is insubordination, misrule and confusion. About one-fifth of the whole command have died from the effects of dissipation." Mr. Warner, of the topographical corps, writing from California, says, "I wish the United States would export a better sample of her citizens to this coun-

1 Adv. of Peace, Vol. VII., pp. 40-3, 43, 54, 58.

2 Adv. of Peace, Vol. VII., pp. 186-9.

try than we have here now. It is lamentable to see so many people who call themselves Americans, without a trace of honesty or honor to control them. If we are to retain this country, we ought to establish a despotism for a few years, until a few of the turbulent spirits can be hanged. The rest might take warning and behave themselves. Very few of them are fit to live in civilized society, and but few are fit even to live here." Still another, himself an advocate of the war, thus writes to the *Mobile Advertiser*: "Some scenes that we occasionally witness here, would shock the morals of any robber in the States. A few days ago, just at nightfall, a Mexican came running into the hospital, crying most piteously, and making all sorts of gesticulations. We followed him to his house, when a sight shocking to behold, burst upon us. On the floor was lying a Mexican, pierced in the breast, from which the blood was rushing forth. Holding his head was his wife and little children. He had been shot by a discharged volunteer, because he refused for gold to barter away the virtue of his daughter, a beautiful girl, who was standing by, her beautiful hair dishevelled, and great drops of grief coursing down her olive cheeks." We will give only one specimen more. "If," says another in the early part of the war, "you would witness wickedness and vice, drunkenness, and all the vicious propensities of the human heart, the worst passions with which our fallen nature is cursed, in their most odious colors, the American camp, I grieve to say, is the place where you may behold them. Full many a bright and promising youth, who looked forward to a life of usefulness and honor, may date his ruin from this campaign—the grand school of iniquity and vice."

SKETCHES OF THE VENDEAN WAR.

The war in La Vendee is a startling chapter in the annals of blood. Though somewhat peculiar, it shows the essential nature and inevitable results of war. It began early in the spring of 1793, and continued only about eight months. The Republican Government of France, in February, 1793, ordered a levy of 300,000 men for the wars in which they had just involved themselves with the allied powers; and the attempt to enforce this obnoxious measure, was the occasion of rousing the whole mass of Vendeaners in spontaneous and determined resistance to the government.

We quote from Alison, merely premising, that La Vandee, containing some years since 800,000 souls, but a much larger number in 1793, lies in the west part of France on the ocean, immediately south of the Loire. We do not make ourselves responsible for the war-spirit of the writer, and hope our readers will need no caution on that score. Alison writes as if there were no glory like that of war.

VENDEAN MODE OF WARFARE.—The method of fighting pursued by this brave but motly assemblage was admirably adapted both to the spirit by which they were animated, and the peculiar nature of the district in which the contest was conducted. Their tactics consisted in lining the numerous hedges with which the fields were enclosed, and remaining unseen, till the Republicans had got fairly enveloped by their forces; they then opened a fire at once from every direction, and with such fatal accuracy, that a large proportion of the enemy were generally prostrated by the first discharge.